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ABSTRACT

In 2002, the International Organization for Migration provided pre-arrival cultural orientation training to 905 Vietnamese Montagnard refugees living in a transit processing facility on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. The training was specifically designed to prepare the refugees for third country resettlement to the United States. It provided tools and information necessary for beginning new lives in the United States. Classes were intended to dispel misconceptions and unrealistic expectations about the new society; provide accurate information about the country of resettlement; and inform refugees about social and community services available to them. Other topics included refugees' rights and responsibilities, laws, cultural norms and values of the receiving country, and information regarding transit. The Vietnamese Montagnards presented a unique challenge because their sheltered, tribal way of life in the Central Highlands rendered them ill-equipped for the technologically driven world they were poised to enter. Post-training assessment was not possible, but overall, refugees were eager to attend the courses. They had very little knowledge of the United States or modern culture. Few had worked outside the home or farm. It appeared that the training allayed some of their fears, dispelled misconceptions, and taught them how to survive in the western world. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education.) (SM)

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INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION
(IOM)

CULTURAL ORIENTATION FOR VIETNAMESE MONTAGNARD REFUGEES

A SPECIAL PROJECT OF IOM CAMBODIA

Prepared by
Leslie Timko
August 2002

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2002, the task of providing pre-arrival cultural orientation (CO) training to a group of 905 Vietnamese Montagnard refugees living in a transit processing facility on the outskirts of Phnom Penh was undertaken by the International Organization for Migration. This training was specifically aimed at preparing the refugees for 3rd country resettlement to the United States.

Key Issues

The purpose of pre-arrival cultural orientation is to provide refugees with the tools and information they will need to begin new lives in another country. Classes are designed with a number of issues in mind, namely to dispel refugees' misconceptions and unrealistic expectations of the culture and society they are about to join; to provide accurate information about their country of resettlement; and to inform refugees about social and community services available to them.[1] Other topics covered in the training include refugees' rights and responsibilities, laws, cultural norms and values of the receiving country, and information regarding transit.

The Vietnamese Montagnards presented a challenge in that their sheltered, tribal way of life in the Central Highlands rendered them ill equipped for the technologically driven world they were poised to enter. This population, - who do not consider themselves ethnic Vietnamese – has historically experienced conflict with the VN government particularly over land issues. During the Vietnam War they fought alongside US troops and developed close ties with US Special Forces. The Montagnards staged demonstrations in February 2001 calling for independence, return of ancestral lands, and religious freedom. Following the protests, the VN police intervened and many Montagnards fled their villages and hid in the jungle along the Cambodian border. In May 2001, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) established camps for the Montagnards in Modolkiri and Ratanakiri provinces. After a period of political limbo and failed repatriation attempts, pressure at the camps intensified and the US offered to resettle the group which at that time numbered 905.

Project Activities

CO commenced at the transit facility on 6 May 2002. The course was conducted by an American with four years experience in 3rd country resettlement in the US. A translator fluent in English, Vietnamese, and Khmer was hired to assist. All refugees twelve years of age and above were scheduled to attend one of fifteen three day sessions. Classes met for 5hrs/day. Approximately 50 individuals attended each session with a total of 755 having completed CO training by the end date of 4 July.

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[1] Pindie Stephen, "Effective Orientation as a Critical Component in the Integration of Resettled Refugees," paper presented at the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, Sweden, April 2001

The topics covered on the first day of training were as follows:

- Pre-arrival processing
- Overview of the US
- North Carolina
- Role of Resettlement Agency
- Community Services
- Housing

Training on day two comprised:

- Transportation
- Employment
- Money and budgeting
- Education

And finally, day three topics included:

- Health
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Law
- Cultural Adjustment
- Travel

Findings

The refugees were eager to attend the CO courses, with some entering the class before they were scheduled to. The class was conducted in Vietnamese and save for approximately 10-15 individuals who understood only their tribal language, all the refugees indicated that they understood the translator. Most were able to take notes with the notebooks and pens provided. Many times children younger than twelve attended the classes along with their parents. Issues regarding the importance of being on time were stressed and the refugees generally adhered to the schedule.

There was a vast amount of material to cover in three days. The refugees were given translated hand outs outlining each day's topics and were asked to follow along. Each day a sign in sheet was used to help refugees practice writing their names the American way, as well as the date, and date of birth. Many refugees did not know or did not remember the day and month of their birth. Many did not have last names.

The refugees' knowledge of the US was all but non-existent. They knew very little to nothing about the place they would be resettled. The majority of the Montagnards were very shy and reticent to raise their hands to ask questions. Generally in each class there were one or two participants who did take the lead and engage with the instructor, but this was uncommon behavior for most.

Of the fifteen sessions held, approximately one to two people in each class had ever seen a stove, refrigerator, or western style toilet. Most had never been to a modern market and they indicated to the instructor that the idea of a bathroom was a very foreign concept. They usually bathed in a stream.

Mapping skills were lacking in the group so exercises helping them to recall the places where they had lived and to visualize them as a map, were employed. Few had ever ridden a bus and not one indicated that they had ever driven a car. The group that had come from the Ratanakiri camp flew to Phnom Penh but the group from Mondulkiri arrived overland and none had ever been on a plane.

Few had ever worked outside the home, farm, or coffee plantation. The idea of doing so was a cause of stress for the refugees. But after conducting some transferable skill exercises the groups felt more confident that they had skills they could use to work in the US. Similarly, money and budgeting were a source of anxiety for the Montagnards. But once a budget was mapped out on the board, outlining an example of the income and expenses that they might have, the idea that they could actually exist financially became less frightening and abstract, and more of a reality.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes that will be experienced by this group, is the amount of freedom they will enjoy in the US. These individuals are used to being watched very closely by the authorities and needing to ask permission to travel. They had been discouraged and many times forbidden to practice their Evangelical religion. The variety of religions that people practice freely in the US at any time and with anyone seemed a shock to them. Some had questions about land ownership and the ability to study without discrimination.

The topic of physically disciplining spousal and child was a delicate one to broach as it is generally accepted in their culture. It was stressed that it is taken very seriously in the US and there are protections in place if individuals are experiencing abuse. Cultural adjustment issues were sometimes met with laughter, other times with amazement. The US notion of privacy is a hard one for the Montagnards to grasp. They are used to living together, sharing and helping each other.

The final unit on transit was of critical importance to this group. Navigating one's way across the globe is a formidable undertaking even for a seasoned traveler. For those who had never even ridden on a bus, the prospect proved daunting. But the refugees embraced the idea and the practical training employed during this unit, and many expressed excitement about the journey ahead.

Benefits

Post training assessment was not possible due to time limitations, but it is sensed that after the training some fears had been allayed, some misconceptions dispelled. The training provided a much needed forum for discussion of feelings, fears, questions. As the training came nearer to the end and refugees remaining had seen many of their friends leave, the earnestness of one class turned to anxiety and fear of being left behind. The issue was raised in the class and the refugees were able to talk about their feelings. During class the following day they expressed that they were feeling better and could concentrate more having had the opportunity to discuss the issues they were concerned with.

There are benefits to the practical training employed. The refugees learned how to prepare some basic survival meals, how to use a western style toilet, what it will be like to go through security at the airport, board the plane and find their seat. Simple as it may seem they have

some basic knowledge about how to fill out a form, how to write their date of birth in the US, what to expect and what not to expect from their resettlement agency.

Through mapping and graphing exercises they learned skills that will help them in studying for the General Educational Development (GED) test for their high school equivalency diploma. When the first utility bill arrives they will know how to read the graph included in the bill. They learned a bit about team work and multi-tasking. An attempt at describing irony was even included for one particularly bright class.

Limitations

The major limitation faced during this project was the restraint on time. This population could have benefited greatly from longer sessions and smaller classes. In addition, an initiative by the instructor to hold informal women's sessions during the lunch break could not continue after only two were held, due to the lack of an appropriate translator.

Conclusion

To take a group such as this, for which the tribal way of life is the only one they know, and to attempt to teach them about existence in a vastly different culture in a mere three days time, proved a challenging and exciting mission. The materials included in this report may be utilized in the training of similar populations. It is clear from the data that these individuals needed and will benefit from this type of training. The Montagnards are resilient, strong and like most refugees, survivors. Furthermore, the state of North Carolina where they are resettling has a broad network of support, unlike many places that a number of refugees find themselves upon arrival in the US. Three thousand Montagnards have already settled in North Carolina. They obtained jobs quickly and became contributing members of society. [2]

The cultural orientation sessions for this population were rich and profound, the results of which may not be realized for some time. Reports from resettlement agencies working with the group during their first months indicate that there are varying degrees of progress and issues, but that overall, the project is moving along well. There is concern for their emotional and psychological well-being with so many separated from families and the "shock" of it all. This is a normal aspect of the resettlement experience. But the Montagnards are on their way to a new life free of persecution and repression, and it is hoped that the things they learned during CO at the transit facility in Phnom Penh will be with them as needed.

[2] North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services website

2. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

The Montagnards, or "mountain people" are a collection of hill tribe members from the Vietnamese Central Highlands. They are sometimes referred to as "Dega". As opponents of communism, the Montagnards fought alongside US troops during the Vietnamese war and developed strong ties to US Special Forces. They do not consider themselves ethnic Vietnamese, and have historically experienced conflict with the Vietnamese government, particularly over land issues. According to some sources, the Montagnards are among those with the highest poverty and illiteracy rates in Vietnam. In addition they state that there is a perception among highlanders that Vietnamese government agencies have discriminated against them regarding healthcare and provision of other social services.[3]

In February 2001, the Montagnards staged mass protests in support of land rights, independence, and freedom of religion. The Vietnamese police responded and this led to an exodus of Montagnards across the border to Cambodia's Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri provinces where they hid in the jungle. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) set up border camps for this population in May 2001. Following a period of political limbo and failed repatriation attempts, in March 2002 the United States government offered to resettle the group which at that time numbered 905.

In April 2002, the group was moved to a transit processing facility, an empty garment factory on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. The time frame for their resettlement was June –August 2002.

Cultural Orientation is a critical component to the successful resettlement of refugees everywhere. [4] Due to the Montagnard's tribal way of life, and lack of exposure to even the simplest modern facilities it was of particular importance for this population. An American currently residing in Phnom Penh with 4 years experience resettling refugees from eighteen different countries in the US, was hired to develop and conduct the course.

This report provides detailed three day lesson plans specific to the Montagnards, but which may be used for populations being resettled in the US with similar backgrounds or levels of exposure to modern, Western life. Summary information and observations follow each day's lesson plan.

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[3] Human Rights Watch, "Repression of Montagnards: Conflicts Over Land and Religion in Vietnam's Central Highlands," April 2002

[4] Pindie Stephen, "Effective Orientation as a Critical Component in the Integration of Resettled Refugees," paper presented at the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees, Sweden, April 2001

3. METHODOLOGY

IOM Nairobi was instrumental in providing materials from which the three day course was created.

3-Day Course (15 Hours)

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
8:30-11:30 • Class Introduction **Break** • Pre-arrival Processing • America Overview • North Carolina Welcome **Break** • Role of the Resettlement Agency **Lunch** **2:00-4:00** • Community Services • Housing • Welcome Video	**8:30-11:30** • Review of day 1 • Transport **Break** • Employment **Lunch** **2:00-4:00** • Budgeting and Money Management • Education • Welcome Video	**8:30-11:30** • Review of day 2 • Health **Break** • Rights and Responsibilities • Law **Lunch** **2:00-4:00** • Cultural Adjustment • Travel • Welcome Video

The course was designed to provide an enhancement to the contents of the Center for Applied Linguistic's (CAL) "Welcome to the United States" video and guidebook.

A copy of the video in Vietnamese was sent from IOM Ho Chi Minh, and CAL shipped 120 guidebooks for the training, also in Vietnamese. Special attention was given to designing a course for a population with such limited to non-existent experience of the world outside the VN Central Highlands, or the border camps in Cambodia.

A translator, fluent in Vietnamese and Khmer was selected for the training. A Kampuchea Krom (a Cambodian ethnic minority group in Vietnam) who had also experienced repression by the Vietnamese government, the translator showed great compassion and empathy for the refugees and provided a much needed cultural link to the group.

Prior to classes, materials and information translated into Vietnamese were posted on two walls at the camp, describing each day of CO. The instructor worked with UNHCR staff to establish a space in the camp for the training. The local Cambodian NGO Friends lent two western style toilets and an electric stove to the project. A working refrigerator was procured for the "kitchen" area as well.

All refugees 12 years of age and above were scheduled to attend CO classes. Many times younger children accompanied their parents to the classes as well. Of the 905 in the camp at that time, 755 fit the age criteria. In order to train a group of this size in the requisite time needed to allow for their departure dates, 15 units were scheduled each comprising 3 day sessions of approximately 50 individuals per session. Classes met from 8:30am-11:30am, and resumed at 2:00pm-4:00pm. During breaks the refugees were encouraged to bring their musical instruments to the class to play. Classes ran Monday-Friday with an occasional Saturday class. This schedule allowed for the classes to run overtime, which many times they did. Classes commenced 6 May and ended 4 July. The group from the Ratanakiri camp, mostly men, attended training first. They were followed by the Mondolkiri group which included an increased number of women and children.

[It was the intention of the instructor to conduct informal women's classes 3x's/week during the lunch break throughout the 15 consecutive sessions. Two sessions were held for the Ratanakiri women. These sessions dealt with sensitive issues such as gender equality, reproductive health issues, and domestic violence. Due to problems finding an appropriate translator for the women's sessions, classes for the women in the Mondolkiri group were not able to commence.]

4. STATISTICS/DEMOGRAPHICS

Montagnard refugees who attended cultural orientation

Age Range	Sex Distribution		Total
	Male	Female	
18-60 and above	561	118	679
12-17 y.o.	45	31	76
Total	606	149	755

5. LESSON PLAN - DAY 1

CULTURAL ORIENTATION FOR VIETNAMESE MONTAGNARDS

Class preparation
Set up classroom with pen and notebook on each chair
Shake everyone's hand as they enter and take seats
*Ask how many people can understand Vietnamese – may have to group people appropriately at this point.

- Tell them the schedule and write it on board.
- Introduce instructors
- Explain given name, then family name, sometimes referred to as first name and last name.
- Explain dates: In US month first, then day, then year. Same for writing date of birth.

*Exercise: pass sign in sheet around room, have each person sign name US way, date of birth, then today's date. Have on board to show.

- Explain our professions:
  Leslie - Resettlement in US 4 years
  Boremey – Teacher 12 years
  Ask us questions, lots of questions. I have resettled people in the US for four years. You will be leaving soon so now is the time. Americans like it when people ask questions, they like to help. Don't be shy.

Intro to CO Course: In the next three days I need to teach you about:
*Handout translated

Day 1
- Pre-arrival Processing – IOM Loan, bag
- Overview of the USA
- North Carolina
- Role of Resettlement Agency
- Community Services
- Housing

Day 2
- Transportation (For Mondolkiri group, start flight information)
- Employment
- Money and budgeting
- Education

Day 3

- Health
- Rights and responsibilities
- Law
- Cultural Adjustment
- Travel

This is a lot to cover. This course is for you. If I am going too fast, tell me. There may be some things that we talk about that you already know, but not everyone will. Please be patient and help others. Don't be afraid to raise your hand. I will try to make it as fun as possible, but some of the material is serious and important for you to know. When you get to the US there will be people to help you, but it is easier if you know some things before you arrive

Pre-Arrival Processing

In addition to the interviews and medical examinations you are having at the camp, pre-arrival processing also includes:

The IOM Travel Loan

- Helps other refugees
- Helps establish credit
- Helps you to become independent

IOM bag – Keep it with you when you travel, do not trade with anyone else.

Intro to US

*Who can find the US on the globe, on the map?

What do you know about the US? What do you want to know about the US?
*List on board
If they don't ask questions, have them take some time to write some to put in the question box, 5 minutes or so.

The US is made up of many different people from all over the world. They have different racial and ethnic backgrounds, a variety of religious beliefs and values.
Explain size and diversity, climate, topography.

*Exercise: How many tribes in the Highlands? [Have a refugee list them on board]
What makes them different?

Americans value self reliance and responsibility
Your resettlement agency and the govt. will help you in the beginning and will make sure that you become self-sufficient. Your continued success depends on you. I have confidence that you will all do very well.

You will be expected to go to work as soon as you can find a job. Your resettlement agency will help you with this. You will need to support yourself and your family. Independence is a good thing in the US, and working makes you independent.
LEARN ENGLISH, LEARN ENGLISH, LEARN ENGLISH!!

Permanency

- After one year you apply for permanent resident alien status- green card.
- After 4 ½ years you can apply for citizenship.

Welcome to North Carolina

*Where is North Carolina? Explain East coast and West coast of the US.

You are very lucky. I know it is very sad to leave your home, but many people in North Carolina are very concerned about you and are getting ready for your arrival. They will do everything possible to help you in your new life.
NC is a beautiful place. There are Mountains and coastline, and heartland.
*Show them map of state. Show the circled places they will be resettled.
There are 4 seasons and the climate is warm compared to other parts of the US.
*Seasons exercise.
You will be living in medium sized cities.
[list Montagnard resources from e-mail here]

Role of Resettlement Agency

These are the first people you will meet. They are your sponsors. They will pick you up at the airport and bring you to your home where there will be food. What foods do you like to eat?
[List of food here on board with translations.]

MONTAGNARD FOOD LIST

Apples, oranges	Shrimp	Cooking oil
Bananas	Coffee	Water Buffalo
Chilies	Tea	Grapes
Tomatoes	Sugar	Butter
Scallions	Salt	Bread
Onions	Vegetables	Crackers/biscuits
Curry powder	Milk	Cookies
Rice	Chicken	Chocolate
Fish	Duck	MSG
Fish sauce	Beef	Cheese
Crabs	Eggs	Black pepper

You will be very tired from the trip. The next day they will pick you up and bring you to the office. They will know your names, ages, occupation, ethnicity, religion, any medical problems you may have that need attention in the states.
You will be assigned a caseworker. This person, others from the agency, and sometimes volunteers will help you to:

*Handout translated:

- obtain household furnishings and clothing,
- obtain a Social Security card (Proof that you have applied for this card is necessary to begin the search for employment.),
- learn to use the local public transportation system,
- begin to learn about American customs and laws,
- enroll your children in school,
- find a job,
- learn about the U.S. money system,
- arrange for a medical examination or follow-up medical care, if necessary, soon after arrival,
- find English language programs or volunteer tutors, and
- learn about community services in your area

Resettlement agencies ensure that all your necessary expenses and basic living costs are covered for the first 30 days in the United States. There are programs you may enter if you are not yet working.

- Match Grant
- State assistance programs.

It will provide advice and other services for at least 3 more months. They will let you know in advance when you need to start paying your own bills. This can be a scary time, but it is a first step in becoming independent.

Community Services

The resettlement Agency does not do everything. There are separate federal programs and community service agencies that help people help themselves. These include:

- Mutual assistance associations (MAAs)
- Social service agencies
- Religious insitiutions
- Food stamps
- Energy assistance
- Cash assistance
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for people over 65

The police

In the US the police are there to help you, to enforce the law and ensure public safety. It is illegal for the police to abuse anyone in the US. Do not be afraid if you see a policeman/woman.

Fire departments and emergency medical services
Ask how many have used a phone. Show photos of pay phones and personal phones.
If you need help in an emergency, the number to call in the US is **911** [put on board]
If you call this # and can't explain in English where you are, stay on the line and they will find you. Do not hang up!
Fire, ambulance, emergency. Keep a card with important #'s with you at all times.

Housing
The resettlement agency will find you a first home. Sometimes, in the beginning, people have to live together. The home or apartment will have the necessary furnishings. They will look different to you. There will be separate rooms, doors and windows that lock.

Americans sleep on beds with mattresses. You don't have to if you don't want to, but the law requires that we get beds for you, pillows too, and blankets. There should be a table, some chairs and maybe a couch.

The kitchen will be different.
*Has anyone seen a stove like this? [demo oven here]
Have someone draw their coal burning cookers on the board, near the enlarged dial. Explain the differences in heat – high, medium, low, in terms of many coals, fewer, and fewer.
Electric or gas oven
Stove top: teach how to cook rice and a simple stir fry
Oven: teach how to cook on a pan. A whole chicken takes about 40 minutes
Make sure you turn it off after you are finished

*How often do you get food? Americans go to the market only one or two times a week.
Refrigerator and freezer-to keep foods cold and fresh.
Important to keep very clean so no insects or rodents will come.
Show forks and knives, demonstrate how to use them.
Demo canned food and can opener. Let them try.

The bathroom is VERY different. [demo toilet here]
You can sit on it or squat over it. Do not stand on it.
The toilet is not for washing clothes, body parts, or vegetables or food of any kind.

Bathtub, shower, sink, hot and cold water.
There are no drains in the bathrooms so it is very important to keep the water in the bathtub, sink and toilet, not on the floor or it will ruin it, and if people live below you it will rain on them and they will not be happy.

Review of day and questions.

VIDEO

6. SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS - DAY 1

Shaking each refugee's hand while welcoming them, and making eye contact was an important way to make a connection and get a "feel" for the class. Nearly every participant of the cultural orientation classes was earnest and eager to attend. Some refugees even "snuck in" to earlier classes. They took copious notes. When asked, nearly all of the Montagnards indicated that they understood Vietnamese. Occasionally when only a tribal language was understood by a participant, a helper from the class was asked to sit by that person and assist.

The sign in sheet proved to be a worthwhile exercise. Refugees will be expected to fill out numerous forms during the resettlement process and learning some basics will help to expedite situations. Learning the correct way to write the date in the US will help to avoid confusion regarding date of birth, etc. Some refugees did not have last names. When it was suggested that they could use Y or H (male or female indicators) the ref's did not wish to do so.

The refugees did not know that they were required to pay back their travel expenses. Explaining to them that this helps other refugees travel made sense to them. It was also an opportunity to describe credit in very simple terms, to stress self sufficiency, and how paying back the travel loan on time was a good way to get them started in that process.

The majority of the refugees did not know where the US was located. One or two in each class was able to come to the globe or map and identify the US sometimes with difficulty.

Knowledge of the US was extremely limited to, in most cases, non-existent. The refugees were reluctant to raise their hands to ask questions about life in the US, so a "question box" was introduced where they could write down questions anonymously. While most of the questions centered on language and the fear associated with earning a living, there were some that deviated beyond those topics. Selected questions include:

1. Why is there equality between men and women in the US when men are stronger?
2. Will I be lonely in a strange world?
3. Is there any help for people with disabilities?
4. Can I be a soldier?
5. When did Columbus discover America? Where exactly did he put his first step? Before that, were there indigenous people? What are they called now?
6. Are we allowed to fish?
7. On weekends, can I go to visit another town or other parts of the state? Do we have to ask permission for traveling?

8. Are the people in the US superstitious?

9. Are the landscapes beautiful?

10. Can we buy land?

One refugee expressed that he/she wanted to return to Vietnam.

When asked about the different tribes in the Central Highlands, the class became engaged in the exercise. One person wrote at the board while the class shouted out different tribes. The only thing that makes them different according to most of the classes is language. But some individuals in other classes described differences in dress and eating habits.

In explaining permanency, three steps were stressed: arriving with refugee status, after one year applying for permanent resident alien status, and finally after 4 ½ years applying for citizenship. The example of Cambodian refugees who had not changed their status and were currently being deported to Cambodia after serving prison sentences in the US for crimes committed there, was used to underscore the importance of changing status.

The instructor was able to communicate via e-mail to many of the key resettlement individuals, agencies in North Carolina. They provided information about housing and resources available to the Montagnards upon arrival. Maps and a video about North Carolina were sent to the camp from North Carolina through an individual working for Human Rights Watch who had been in the states. All of this proved helpful in that it alleviated some fears for the refugees to have such direct contact to the places they were going to, and the people receiving them. This group has much more support than many refugees resettling in the US. They particularly enjoyed the idea that the instructor would send the list of foods that they like to eat via e-mail.

Personal, positive experiences with the police in the US were given as examples of how the police generally function. Instructions regarding emergencies were stressed.

Housing will be very different for the Montagnards who are used to living communally with many people sharing one room on one level. One man expressed fear that he might be living alone.

Almost none had ever seen a stove, a refrigerator or a Western style toilet. A visual portraying a stove top dial and correlating coals was used to explain how the stove top was similar to the cooking they do over open coals. A lesson in cooking rice was given. Foods that must be kept in the refrigerator were reviewed. They had not used knives and forks to eat before and a simple lesson was given. They were told they would have knives and forks on the plane. They received a review of canned food, boxed food, and food in jars. The translator told a story about an Asian family in the US who made the mistake of buying cat food because they were just looking at the pictures on the can.
Having western style toilets available for demonstration (though not operating) was critical. They had never seen nor used them before. They were not familiar at all with what Americans refer to as the bathroom. They told the instructor that they usually bathed in the stream.

7. LESSON PLAN - DAY 2

CULTURAL ORIENTATION FOR VIETNAMESE MONTAGNARDS

Transportation – Mapping skills
*Talk about crossing the street

Detailed information about local public transportation will be provided by your resettlement agency soon after your arrival.
Many people ride the bus, like you saw in the photo on the wall.

- Bus pass
- Bus map
- Bus route/schedule
- Bus stop

Have someone draw a map on the board of where they lived in the Highlands. Do an overlay of two bus routes. Show them stops, etc.

Tell them when they have time before they start work they should get together with some friends as just ride the bus around and around to become familiar with their surroundings.

Some people have cars

- You need a license to drive a car
- This involves training and a test
- Cars can be expensive

Many of the places where you will live are close to stores and markets so you can walk there. Once you have saved some money think about buying a car but make sure to get help from someone you trust.

Employment
*Handouts from student notebook "What are the advantages of working?"

In the United States, great value is placed on being employed.
Employment is not guaranteed by the government or your resettlement agency. But you will get lots of help with this so you can become self sufficient and independent.
Your first job will almost certainly be one of several that you will hold.

- The normal full time work week is 40 hours, 8 hours/day.
- Shifts-write times on board
- Hourly and salaried workers
- Both men and women work. The US is expensive so this is necessary for many people.
- $6.50-$8.00/hr

- Overtime
- Gross pay
- Net pay

As an example:
$8.00/hr: $320 .00/wk gross, $272.00/wk net $1,280.00/mo gross, $1088.00/mo net

Types of work:

Entry level
Requires little training or experience. Factory worker, landscaper, restaurant worker, hotel housekeeper. A good place to start while you learn more English.
Skilled labor
Requires formal training, more English and skill. Auto mechanic, electrician.
Professional jobs
Require at least a college degree, advanced English and skills.

Computers-it is very important to try to learn some computer skills. Even to work in a store you need some basic idea. And someday you can send me an e-mail message!
Our e-mail addresses on the board

You need a SOCIAL SECURITY CARD to work
* Break out into groups of 5
Hand out application to see it & practice filling out some simple sections

Transferable Skills Exercise
Use restaurants as an example, housekeeper, landscaper, construction, coffee roaster.
*Handout-"tips for success" translated.

Money and budgeting
Living in the US can be expensive. Refugees need to be very careful about budgeting and their money.

- Review what money looks like.
- Show and explain check book, credit cards
- Monthly expenses on board
- Show income and expenses based on 40Hrs/week @$8.00/hr

The resettlement agency, church people, and volunteers will help you with this in the beginning. They will show you where and how to shop and how to budget. They should make a budget for you. It can be scary and frustrating at first but you will be fine.

Education
*Who has attended school?
In the US everyone can go to school. Public education is free and is required by law for children ages 6 to 16. Books are free. Transportation to and from school is free.
Explain levels.
College is not free but a state school is less expensive than a private college and many are quite good.

Montagnard Scholarship Fund.

Adult education
Many Americans work and study.
Explain GED
You will attend ESL classes to learn English.
You can attend employment classes and skill training too.
Take a computer class if you can!

Review of day and questions.

VIDEO

8. SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS - DAY 2

Based on the experience of the instructor when dealing with similar populations, mapping skills are generally lacking. In an attempt to address this, an exercise during the transportation section was developed. A refugee was asked to volunteer to come to the board and draw a map of his/her home in the highlands, citing their house, a family member's house or house of a friend. Then two different colored bus routes were drawn over the map. Various exercises dealing with taking the bus, time tables, schedules, changing busses, were employed using this familiar map. Asking a refugee to draw a map of the camp was also an effective way to get the refugees to start making mental images of places.

The Ratanakiri group, who had flown on a plane to Phnom Penh, received more information about car ownership. For the Mondolkiri groups who were yet to take their first plane trip, orientation to air travel replaced car ownership issues.

Employment is a major stressor for refugees, the Montagnard's were no exception. The majority had never worked outside the home or farm or coffee plantation. Many men were nervous about their wives working. This was a point in the training where information regarding sexual harassment was introduced.

The transferable skills exercise was helpful in informing the Montagnards that they do, in fact have many skills that can be used for working in the United States. Of note is their ability to roast coffee. There have been refugees that have successfully secured jobs as coffee roasters at coffee houses. Other abilities they have are construction, food preparation, landscaping.

Some time was spent discussing the Public Library and the resources one can find there. They were told to ask their caseworkers to get them a library card. Most public libraries have computers with internet connections and people on staff who can assist. Technology is an important factor in US life and refugees will be left far behind if they don't learn computer skills. It would be helpful if the CO materials from 1997 could be amended with information on how refugees can access computers and computer training.
Breaking up into groups to work on the Social Security Card application showed the refugees the importance of team-work. Prior to the decision to have the class break up into

small groups the refugees who understood directions well were not assisting others in the class and too much time was being spent on this exercise.

Money and budgeting were equally daunting subjects for the Montagnards. A budget was written on the board with an example of a salary based on $8.00/hour. This exercise showed the refugees that they would be able to make ends meet, especially as many of them will be living together and sharing expenses. Many of the questions from the question box focused on their fears associated with earning a living.

Education seemed a sensitive issue for the Montagnards. They were particularly concerned about fees. They seemed relieved when told that school was free from ages 6-16, and that classes to get their GED were also free. One very bright gentleman, when asked if he would attend school in the US replied that he was too old. It was then stressed that Americans attend school at any age and that he should make an effort to get his GED and study more. On the whole there were some very bright individuals in the CO trainings and it is hoped that these people, who have been kept from schooling for a variety of reasons will avail themselves of training and educational opportunities in the US.

9. LESSON PLAN DAY - 3

CULTURAL ORIENTATION FOR VIETNAMESE MONTAGNARDS

Health

*What do you do when you become sick?
Discuss coining and cupping here.

Health care is a basic right of all people in the US. But it can be very confusing. We will talk about some things today, but make sure to ask your resettlement agency for specific information.

You have all had the required tests and vaccinations here. But there is a type of Malaria that may not show up in the test and can make you sick within 5-10 years. If you have fever, sweats, chills, headaches, let your doctor know that it might be malaria. Influenza has similar symptoms and it is less serious. They will do a blood test and you can be cured with medicine.

Two types of medicines:

1. Over the counter
2. Prescription

Be certain you follow the instructions on the box, or from the doctor.
Shortly after you arrive, you will go to the doctor for a free health assessment. Make sure there is a translator and answer questions truthfully about your health, if you don't know say you don't know.

You will be eligible for 8 months of free medical care as a refugee.[estimate their arrival and put month on board, then list months they are eligible]
MAKE SURE YOU TAKE CARE OF ANY HEALTH PROBLEM DURING THAT TIME: DOCTOR, DENTIST, EYEDOCTOR, ETC. Health care is very expensive in the US and can be confusing.

Medical Insurance – from employer, self pay small amounts over time if no insurance. Don't not go to the doctor if you are afraid you can't afford to. Use example from CT.
Use example of my night at the hospital.

Keep organized records of your immunizations, especially for children who need them for school.

WHEN TO VISIT THE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

3 Types of visits:

1. Emergency – Call 911 say "EMERGENCY" give your address or stay on the phone, don't hang up, and they will find you.
-This is for a sudden illness or injury that needs immediate attention:
chest pain or pressure with sweating and shortness of breath, being beaten by someone, loss of consciousness, bleeding that does not stop, if a woman starts having baby too soon.

2. Urgent care- Services for medical problems that can be serious, but not life threatening: High fever, vomiting, diarrhea or stomach pain that does not stop, coughing or vomiting blood, any problem that gets worse.

3. Routine medical care- Make an appointment, be on time, tell them you need a translator or bring one with you. Check ups.

WHERE TO GO? Ask your caseworker to help you with this in your community.

<u>Rights and responsibilities</u>

Freedom:

- Of religion
- Of expression
- To travel within the US
- To work, study and own property

Responsibility:
In the US people are expected to be financially responsible. One time a refugee said to me. "Freedom is not free".

Financial Independence:

- Financial independence is the primary goal for all refugees.

- All individuals above 18 are expected to support themselves.
- The resettlement agency helps you in the beginning but you will feel proud when you don't need them any more. And they will be proud of you.

REFUGEE STATUS

Before you come to the US you will get an **I-94 card**. This card is VERY important. Make a copy and keep the original in a safe place.
*Write on board and make a little picture to show them.
Proof of this card guarantees your rights of:

- Employment
- Travel anywhere in the US
- Buy property
- Attend school
- Enjoy equal protection under US law
- Apply for your family to join you

Law
Sometimes refugees have to adjust their traditions to comply with US laws.
*Can you think of anything that is acceptable in your culture, that might be against the law in the US?
*Buffalo sacrifice?

If you break some laws it is very bad and could harm your status as a refugee. Some of these include:

- Child abuse
- Spousal abuse
- Counterfeiting
- Theft
- Purchasing illegal drugs
- Selling illegal drugs
- Illegal drug use

Legal Services - refugees have the right to legal services if they are in need. Discuss with caseworker.
Discrimination- this is illegal in the US. ALL people should be treated the same.
Homosexuality – the US govt. is one of the most tolerant in the world. Sexual orientation is considered a person's individual right to choose.
Police - police are employed to uphold the law and protect citizens. Police officers are not allowed to accept bribes.
Rights of Children - child labor laws protect children who work. Children below the age of 15 are not allowed to work.

SOME IMPORTANT LAWS
*Hand out translation

- It is illegal to leave a child below the age of 12 unattended
- Children age 6-16 must attend school
- Spousal and child abuse are against the law
- Smoking is illegal in many public places
- You must be a citizen to own a gun
- All males between 18-25 years of age must register for Military Service. All you do is fill out a form.
- You need a license to hunt or fish.
- Urinating in public is not legal. If you need to pee or poo you must find a public restroom[show the symbols for this]
- Littering!!!

Not laws but:

- Spitting isn't so nice to do in public
- Blowing your nose with out a tissue is considered impolite
- People wait in lines in the US. Please don't go ahead of people. They will not like it.
- People usually sit in chairs, not on the floor
- People usually keep their shoes on to keep their feet clean
- Please don't slaughter live animals-chickens or pigs, unless you are at a Montagnard home in the country where this can be done.
- Lice picking in public
- Nose picking in public

Cultural Adjustment – Graphing skills
*Happiness Handout

You are likely to experience culture shock:

- Anger, depression, hopelessness
- Frustration at not being able to do simple things like shopping or taking the bus
- Irritability or feelings of anger
- Feeling tired in the day, problems sleeping at night
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches, backaches

This is normal. I felt some of these things when I moved to Cambodia.
This will pass. If it does not after some time, you may want to talk with someone about this so they can help you to feel better. *Make list of mental health professionals on board.

It is important to maintain your cultural identity, never forget who you are or where you came from- America is made up from all different types of people. They all bring things with them to share. You have much to offer America too.

I learned a lot from refugees and shared wonderful times with them. Some Americans will be very interested in the way you live. Some things they told me about the US they didn't like were the way things go so fast, so little time for family, they didn't like the food.

It usually takes 2-5 years to adjust fully. Children usually adapt quicker than adults. Please make sure you don't rely too much on your children because of this. It's not fair to them.

*How can you get help? How can you cope?

CULTURAL VALUES

- Informality – Americans are informal socially, but usually formal in business situations
- Privacy – people in the US value privacy.
- TIME- PEOPLE IN THE US WILL WANT YOU TO BE ON TIME
- Personal Hygiene – Americans are usually very clean
- Self sufficiency

*If I were moving to the Highlands what would you want me to know?
Would I be happy? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. It will be the same for you.

Travel
*Has anyone ever flown on a plane?
*What are some fears you have?

CUSTOMS:
Security is very high at the airports. You can not take illegal drugs, meats, vegetables, fruits, fresh herbs, or any sharp objects with you. *Show my Swiss army knife
*Show magazine photos of the gate, and the security machine.
Explain walking through the metal detector.
*Demonstrate. Have 4-5 volunteers pass through security with IOM bags.

THERE WILL BE AN IOM ESCORT TO HELP YOU

On the Flight
Tell them that their boarding pass will have their seat # on it.
We will practice boarding a plane. They fill the back of the plane first – after older passengers, ones with children, and first class.

[Set the chairs up as if on a flight, have them board at a "gate" and proceed to seats with help from "flight attendants" – use helpers for this]

In flight regulations and safety
seat pocket instructions – show them what is in the seat pocket, the safety instructions and the air-sickness bag.

- No smoking
- Must wear seat belts during take off, landing and when the seatbelt sign is on
- If you need to be sick, there is a bag in the seat pocket in front of you.
- If the air in the cabin decreases in pressure, you need to put an oxygen mask on. It will drop from above.
- If you need to make an emergency water landing, you need to wear the floatation device that is under the seat.
- If there is an emergency exit you must leave through the emergency doors

Flight attendants-They are on all flights, they are there to help you. They give you the free food. [explain that the food comes after you have been flying awhile, explain about drinks and practice what to ask for: coca cola, orange juice, water]

(I have been flying for many years and have never had a problem, only sometimes it can get bumpy, and I get sick to my stomach, you may too, it is normal)

Use of lavatories: A sign on the handle [put this on the board] will read "occupied" if someone is inside, or vacant if it is free. When you get inside you must pull the handle to make it say "occupied", this will turn the light on inside. Again, no standing on the toilet. You need to sit, and use toilet paper, not water. Use the water in the sink to wash your HANDS when you are finished.

Care of infants: All babies must where diapers on plane. Have moms and dads and babies stay during one of the breaks and demonstrate how to put a diaper on a baby.

Asking for help-always remember to say "please help me" if you need help. Ask a flight attendant or airport staff. I ask questions all the time when I fly.

Transit/Flight schedule

Review of day and questions.

VIDEO

10. SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS DAY - 3

Day three provided some of the most colorful, fun, and interesting aspects of the course.

When discussing healthcare, attention was paid to the custom of coining and cupping which leaves marks on the body that appear as bruises. The refugees were told that Americans might not understand and think someone has hurt them. They were not told to stop doing it, but rather to try to explain to anyone who was curious, what it was. If they performed it on school age children they were told that they must inform the teacher.

UNHCR staff at the camp requested an emphasis on the proper dosages of medicines. The Montagnards appear to like medicine and going to the doctor quite a lot. They were told to make certain they followed instructions for any medicines they would take. In addition, many refugees visit the doctor when not really necessary. This can cause problems for the facilities they visit and their healthcare providers. It is important that they understand when they should go for a visit. The refugees were asked to copy down from the board information regarding when to visit the healthcare provider.

The Montagnards were not aware of the freedoms they will enjoy in the United States. This section seemed to both please and astound them. For people who are used to asking permission to visit a neighboring village, or not being allowed to practice their religion or own land, or to speak freely about political issues, the US will be a strange place indeed. And it will take some getting used to.

Many refugees were curious about the laws in the United States. They were surprised to discover that spousal abuse and child abuse are against the law. While this topic drew giggles and laughs, it was important to let the refugees know that in the US these forms of abuse are taken seriously.

The unit on cultural adjustment contained a handout of a graph that measured happiness and time. The instructor used this unit to teach some basic graphing skills. Utility bills in the US many times come with graphs depicting usage. The example of an electric bill was first introduced as a way to explain a graph and when it came time to consider and discuss the "Happiness" graph, the refugees had an understanding of the handout.

A list was put on the board of the professional people who could help in times of depression or emotional instability. While it is not the culture of the Montagnards to seek professional help, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other mental health professionals were described as "tribal elders, or leaders" that were trained to help people with their problems. Many of the refugees copied the list from the board.

Privacy is an unfamiliar concept to the Montagnards. While it is clear that they will welcome being out of the camp where there is little if any privacy, it is unclear if they really understand

the notion of privacy in the US. They were told that they could offer their strong sense of community to those in the US and that that would be a positive thing they have to share.

One of the most interesting exercises involved the refugees imagining that the instructor was a refugee and was to be resettled in the Central Highlands. They were asked to pretend that they had to teach cultural orientation. What would they teach? No short skirts could be worn, the work would be hard, one has to collect firewood in the jungle and look out for leeches that fall from the trees, but the refugee would be welcomed and the Montagnards would be friendly. When asked if the instructor would be happy, they replied "sometimes yes, sometimes no". The same thought was then applied to what they could expect to experience as far as happiness in the US.

The travel unit was a critical one and as many props, participation exercises and practice as possible were employed. For the Ratanakiri group who had flown before, this unit was not as much a stretch on the imagination as it must have been for the Mondolkiri group. One Mondolkiri refugee asked where one went on the plane when one was tired and ready to go to sleep.

The groups practiced going through a simulated security check and metal detector. They also practiced boarding the plane, finding their seats, locating the air sickness bag, and safety instructions, and fastening their seatbelt. When the instructor drew the map of the plane seating chart on the board the translator commented that it looked like a papaya so the airline was named Papaya Airlines and the refugees seemed to like the idea of flying through the sky in a giant papaya. Humor goes a long way at the end of three intensive days of training, in preparation for what must seem like travel to entirely different planet

11. CONCLUSION

It is clear from the experience working with this group that cultural orientation was of paramount importance to the Montagnards. The facts of which are embellished in the summaries following the lesson plans. Their lack of exposure to the outside world beyond their former communities in the Central Highlands and the UNHCR camps rendered the Montagnards ill prepared for the constructs of modernity. But they are strong and motivated people who have a history of survival.

It is too early to measure the myriad of ways in which CO training will hopefully help them to cope with their new surroundings, new lives. But it is the wish of the instructor that they have retained enough to ease some aspects of the resettlement process. Reports from some of the escorts who accompanied them during transit indicate that the travel portion of the training was effective.

The Montagnards are in many ways innocent, poised, earnest, respectful, polite, and cheerful. At the same time they are sad to leave their homeland and their loved ones, afraid and anxious about what lies ahead. It can't be known yet what practical impact the training has had or how their lives will be. Like all refugees they will have losses and hardship but they will gain freedoms and opportunities never experienced before.

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